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Kikongo

Twentieth Anniversary

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Congo News Letter

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KIKONGO - 20th ANNIVERSARY

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Past History – – – Present Problems – – – Future Prospects

PAST HISTORY

1949 marks the 20th anniversary of the founding of Kikongo station. The beginning of the work, however, goes back another ten years. Dr. and Mrs. Thomas Moody, Rev. and Mrs. P.A. MacDiarmid, Rev. and Mrs. A.V. Wakeman all answered the challenge of the great unknown, untouched country beyond the Lufimi and Kwango rivers. They were the first to penetrate into the section that became known as the Kikongo field in 1929. Part of that field will be served from the new station among the Bayaka at Boko. It is fitting, therefore, that upon the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the founding of Kikongo Station we should look into the past for guidance in our plans for the future. The seed sowing was of men, but the increase was of the Lord. In His Name and in His mighty Power, the future will bring a rich harvest in both the Kikongo and Boko fields.

HOW IT ALL BEGAN

We think that it was in 1919 that "Pa" MacDiarmid extended his usual itinerary and crossed the Lufimi river into the Bayaka Kingdom. He could hardly have penetrated into wilder country. The Bayaka are a proud, trigger-quick people of great spirit. They like a fight. They are well-satisfied with themselves in many ways. They have tremendous possibilities and once the Spirit of the Lord takes hold of them, great things will be accomplished.

After many days of hiking up and down hill and across long, hot plains under the tropical sun, "Tata Miki" (as the natives call him) reached the village of Makengo. He was in virgin territory where the gospel of Christ had never been preached. The

people viewed this strange, white man and his caravan with suspicion. They did not respond when he asked to buy food for his carriers. They were not interested in having the gospel message given to them.

It had been a long hard day and Mr. MacDiarmid was hungry, as were his carriers and young David Ronda who accompanied him. "Tata Miki" had a lunch with him, but he couldn't bring himself to eat it all by himself when the rest of the folk were hungry. So he called Ronda to him and shared the lunch with him.

The people stared in disbelief, for of course the whole village had crowded around to stare at the strangers. The chief stepped forward; his jaw dropped in amazement. He had heard about white people, but not this kind of white people . . . . not one who would share his lunch with a black man. He decided that it might be worth while to listen to what this man had to tell. And so it was that, for the first time, the people beyond the Lufimi river heard of the Love of God that gave Jesus to the world. When the caravan moved on, Ronda was left behind to continue telling the people about this Christ who could make white men act as "Tata Miki" did.

FIRST CONGO MISSIONARIES

In the years that followed, the Moodys, the MacDiarmids and the Wakemans continued the seed sowing. Some of it took root. It would soon have been choked by the thorns of fear, superstition, ignorance and witchcraft if it had not been for those whom the missionaries left on the field when they returned to Sona Bata. We wish there were space to give a whole chapter to Ronda's story. He and Antoine Makengo deserve more than this short tribute.

When Ronda returned home for more workers, Antoine Makengo responded to the challenge of the great Bayaka country that had begun to open its heart to the gospel. He and his brave wife started out together. I have never stopped marveling at the fact that Makengo's wife went with him on that journey. Congo women do not belong to their husbands or to themselves; they belong to their own clan. At that time it was extremely unusual to permit a woman to go outside the clan boundries with her

husband.

There were no hotels along the way, no restaurants where food could be bought. Antoine and his wife were entirely dependent on the good will of the people along the way.

OPPOSITION MET

When at last they reached Zikomba, which Ronda had thought would be a promising field, Antoine and his wife met with an hostile reception. The people would not permit them to sleep in the village; they had to build a little shelter on the outskirts. No one would give or sell them food, so they lived on wild roots and jungle fruits. They trapped field mice and hunted wild game. They could never have endured all this if they had not wanted so much to share the Saviour with the people who were so hostile to them.

They were oppressed by the evidences of darkness all about them. Each house was hung with fetishes; each yard had a special garden containing the ancestral trees (cuttings are planted at the time of a death in the village; if the cutting takes root and grows, it is a sign that the spirit of the deceased has come to dwell in the village and it will not be necessary to go to the grave-yard with propitiatory offerings; the offerings can be made at the foot of the ancestral tree in the village). Beside each hut was a smaller hut containing idols and fetishes. The little boys of nine to twelve years old were living in a camp outside the village. These boys' camps are secret societies where the boys spend from one to three years being initiated into the mysteries of "manhood". The lessons include learning how to lie and steal cleverly. The boys wear grass "hula" skirts after the circumcision rite has taken place. Periodically they don ugly masks and raid the village.

ENDURANCE REWARDED

It is amazing that Antoine and his wife endured for so long. They were lonely, and hungry so much of the time. At last the way opened. Antoine was in the forest one day when a woman, heavily burdened and carrying a child, came to a stream that she could not cross without help. Antoine, a man, mind you, helped her across. The next morning, when they opened the door of their

little shelter, Antoine and his wife found a basket of food. The two of them lifted their voices in a hymn of praise, and the people came to listen. It was the first of many times that the people came to listen and to learn about the Christ who made black folk like these two who loved them enough to endure until they were willing to listen. That village later became a church center, to which people from many villages came to sit at the Lord's Table.

ANOTHER DOOR OPENED

Some 130 miles North of the work that was being done by Ronda and Makengo, the Lord was opening another door. A young man by the name of Ntunkadi, who had once been a deacon in the Sona Bata church, had set himself up as a trader in the Bambala country between the Kwango and the Wamba rivers. There was an important trading post at Fayala, which had once been a center to which crude rubber was brought in the early days of Congo's history. Ntunkadi found himself in the midst of a people who had had none of the benefits which he had enjoyed because of his proximity to Sona Bata, and his training in the school there. He had not gone to Fayala to evangelize the people; he had gone with the intention of making his own fortune. God had other plans for his life. It was inevitable that he should contrast his life at Sona Bata with that of the people among whom he was living. It was natural that he should boast of all the wonders of school and hospital. Why, there was a doctor who could kill people, cut them open, sew them up, and bring them back to life again! Ntunkadi's "great learning" impressed the people; they were amazed that he should know the secret of making magic marks on paper the way the white men at Fayala did.

FIRST FRUITS

Ntunkadi took two little Bambala boys into his house as servants. They were Nkuti and Kitunu from the village of Kingondi Mumvula. Nkuti accompanied Ntunkadi to the Lower Congo when he returned there. That is how Nkuti became a school boy at Sona Bata and found the Lord Jesus Christ as his

own Saviour.

Young men from Kinkosi and Mbonga later followed Nkuti to the Mission Station at Sona Bata. It was a long, hot, dangerous walk of about two hundred miles. Their hearts were hungry for this strange message of the Sona Bata missionaries. They accepted it without fully understanding what it was about. When Kalamika, the first Mumbala to be baptised, went down into the water, he had been instructed by the others to keep his eyes open when he went under the water, so as to see if it was true that the spirits of the dead came to this ceremony.

THE GOOD NEWS SPREADS

The people back home were stirred by the tales brought from Sona Bata. They wanted for themselves the benefits that Christianity brought in the way of learning and help for the sick. But they could not all make the long trip to Sona Bata. One day a delegation started on the long trek overland to ask for a teacher. There was no teacher available. It was the time of the great revival in the Sona Bata field when an average of 1000 people were being baptised each year. There were not enough teacher-evangelists to shepherd the huge ingathering. So the disappointed delegation made the weary trek home again.

However, the hunger persisted, and another delegation went to Sona Bata ..... and later on another, until at last their persistence was rewarded and in 1925 David Nzonzi was sent to be the first teacher-evangelist among the Bambala people.

When Thomas Moody visited the field in 1926, he found 46 ready for baptism; when he visited it again in 1927, he baptised 104.

EXTENDED ITINERARY

For an account of the 1928 visit, it might be just as well to quote from C.E. Smith's diary for that period. With a caravan of 45 Bayaka and Bambala carriers, P.A.MacDiarmid and C.E. Smith left Sona Bata on May 15, 1928 on a trek that was to end nearly three hundred miles and 21 days later at the village of Kinkosi, among the Bambala people. Little did they dream that exactly one year after their arrival, on June 5th, the work of clear-

ing the land for the building of Kikongo station would begin.

The trip was made over native trails on foot and by kipoy. A kipoy is a wicker chair suspended between two bamboo poles and carried by four men. About a third of the time was spent in kipoys and two-thirds on foot. A pedometer was used to measure the distance traveled each day. The first part of the trip was through the Sona Bata field where they visited the church centers and attended the annual "matondo" or thanksgiving camp meetings.

May 18. 23 miles. We arrived at a village on a mountain about three P.M. and were told that Kinkasi was "five waters" farther on. Not very encouraging news as this country is very hilly and the paths sandy. Hard walking and seldom that the kipoys can be used.

May 19. Fifty-one passed examination for baptism; what smiles of joy on their faces as they lined up. It was a joyful procession that rushed along the path to the river.

May 20. An interesting feature of the dedication of babies ceremony was when the mothers cut the string which held the heathen charms that hung around the babies' necks. Seven couples were married. One woman showed up just in time; the groom wanted to go ahead without her, but she was located in time to be present at the ceremony. At offering time, the pledges of each village were announced by the presiding officer; everyone gave thanks by clapping their hands in rythm as they sang a verse of "Glory to God". The singing continued while the loose offering was taken. The leader announced that everybody wearing shoes had to put in an extra gift. "Mac" announced that he would put in an extra gift because of his gratitude for his two children, not for his shoes. That started everybody off again, and man after man came to the platform with extra gifts because God had blessed them with children. Vinda preached a splendid sermon. An old deaconess went around with a long pole poking people and shouting at those who were napping.

May 22. Up at 5:30. Climbed the mountain before breakfast. Then had breakfast and were off again by nine o'clock. If it weren't for the grass, this would be a desert. Walked for three and a half hours over flat, sandy, treeless plain. Reached little village

of two houses near the only stream crossed all day. After evening service two of the tired carriers were giving one another "chiropractic" treatment; one lay on the ground while the other walked up and down his back.

May 23. The grass was wet with dew when we started off; it strikes us in the face as we walk along; the barbs get into our clothes to scratch and prick. The kipoy men are doing better today. The first week they jolted me so much that I had a sore back. The paths are so narrow that it is difficult to get one foot ahead of the other, especially as the paths are worn into deep ruts. There are sore spots on the outer sides of my feet from bumping against the side of the path.

May 25. Up at 4:30 A.M. What a time we had crossing the Lumemi river. There were three separate channels with slippery, boggy swamps between them; the bridges in bad condition and submerged. The first two men were on the bridge when a log cracked; they all backed up and could not be persuaded to cross. We took off our shoes and socks and waded across.

May 26. We had a wild night. Little hut that was allotted to us had other occupants. We took turns holding the lantern while searching between the sheets and under the pillow. The fight was unsuccessful. "Mac" moved his bed outside during the wee hours of morning. Only seven miles today, but what a time. Two hours getting through a nasty jungle swamp; dense foliage, many trees, mud, grass and water. One man sank in elephant tracks up to his hips. Arrived at Zikomba in the Bayaka country. Villagers had killed snake and were cooking it. Snake was about 4 inches in diameter; the meat looked white and tender.

May 30. Lufuilu thanksgiving meetings. Now I understand the why of Paul's admonition to eat at home before coming to the Lord's table. Frequently we see the bread being surveyed before the largest piece is selected. When it comes to the communion wine, most of them take a large gulp from the glass offered by the deacon. One man passed it by when he saw that there was only a little left in the glass. He took a large gulp when the deacon came back down the aisle with a full glass. Another man followed the deacon to the table, where he took half a glassful. I suppose that they think a sip is insufficient. We must be careful to see that

the bread and wine do not become fetishes to them.

May 31. Stopped at the Mfulula river for lunch. Before we finished eating, hundreds of small bees came swarming about, getting into food and water and crawling about on our necks and faces. We had a very steep climb out of the valley; it was necessary to pull ourselves up by grabbing the projecting roots of trees in many places. One of the carriers played out half way up the mountainside.

June 1. What a night! Driver ants got into our beds. Mac came out of bed with a bounce, grabbed his trousers, and beat it for the open. I followed. Mac and one of the carriers were busy picking off the "fighters". I got those that were between his shoulder blades. Several of the carriers were swishing burning thatch grass over the ground to rout the invaders. We stayed outside for the rest of the night. I caught a slight cold because of standing outside with insufficient clothing on.

June 2. At the campfire service I couldn't help but notice the difference in the response to the message. It's all so new to these people that they sit and stare; they seem scared to even move. The old chief was roaring at his wives about five PM because they were hanging around our camp and hadn't prepared his food. About ten minutes later he brought us a couple of chickens, two baskets of manioc flour, and a few ears of corn. I suppose he wanted us to know that he bore us no ill because his silly wives wanted to hang around. I feel certain that at the meeting tonight the old fellow was sitting there wondering if our God was more powerful than his fetishes. In any case, he hollered to the women to listen.

June 4. What a reception we got in this village! The teacher had his 40 or 50 boys and girls lined up on both sides of the path, singing hymns of praise and clapping their hands on the beat. Children and village folk followed us to our quarters, singing all the way. They sang another song after we had arrived. Then they all bowed their heads in prayer. How different from the villages we passed through the last two days; here they laugh and talk; they are cleaner; they can sing; they seem anxious to hear more of the gospel. This is the result of Nzonzi's work.

June 5. KINKOSI ! In every village we passed through today

we were met and escorted by groups of people singing with all their might. In each place the people begged us to send them a teacher. There were more than a hundred to welcome us at Kinkosi. In their enthusiasm, our kipoy men took us on the trot for a tour of the village with children running and shouting beside the kipoys. The front man on my kipoy stumbled and fell; the second man piled on top of him. I landed on my feet, right side up; no casualties !

MULTITUDES SEEKING SALVATION

The days from June 5th to 10th were filled with enthusiastic, noisy crowds of people. Delegation after delegation arrived, often headed by boy-teachers who had been trained by Nzonzi. Soon there were two thousand people milling around in the village. The days were filled from dawn until well into the night with the examination of candidates for baptism. Crowds of parents wanted their babies to be dedicated. Dozens of couples, long married according to Congo custom, wanted the seal of a Christian marriage put upon their union. Husbands, wives, and their children all stood together for a multiple ceremony in which 63 couples promised to live together in Christian union.

After the grilling days of examining candidates, 223 were accepted and confessed their faith in Christ by baptism. The thanksgiving offering, during which each tried to out-give the other, amounted to the then staggering sum of 1051.75 francs (about fifty dollars.)

During the three years that Nzonzi had been at work, he had prepared 22 boy-teachers. They had worked so satisfactorily that the offerings for the preceding nine months amounted to francs 3101.00. There was a balance on hand of 874.00 francs after the teacher-evangelists were paid. With this sum they would buy books and supplies for their schools.

The most stirring feature of those memorable days, was the meeting with the chiefs that followed when the hub-bub had died down. Twenty-three chiefs gathered in a semi-circle, with the great Mudikisi at their center, proudly seated upon a leopard skin, and wearing a necklace of leopard teeth. It was he informed the missionaries of the people's desire to have a Mission Station built

in their midst. He said: "We have thrown away our fetishes, we have accepted your teachers, and now we want you to come and build in our midst to care for our sick and to teach us the "Words of God".

MISSION STATION REQUESTED

The Jubilee of the Congo Mission was celebrated in 1928. Secretaries from the Home Boards and representatives of churches in America came out to help celebrate. It was to the 1928 conference that the request of these 23 chiefs was brought. The persistence of the people in seeking for a teacher from Sona Bata, their enthusiastic acceptance of the gospel, and the splendid support given to the new church that had been founded, met with a hearty response from the members of the conference and the visitors from America. So it was voted: "That we locate on the Wamba river between Fayala and Gabia, and that Mr. and Mrs. C.E. Smith be designated to the proposed new site near Fayala.

MISSIONARIES SENT

On February 19, 1929, the Smiths left Sona Bata to begin the great adventure. A tent, camp cots, folding table and chairs, cooking equipment, school supplies, medicine boxes and many cases of canned foods made up the supplies that went with them. Steam-boat travel up the Congo, Kwa, Kasai, Kwango and Wamba rivers brought them on March 13th to Fwakamba, a trading post on the Wamba river. The news soon spread and crowds of people appeared. Men and women vied with one another for the privilege of carrying the supplies the four hour trek to Kinkosi, where a nice little mud and thatch house had been built for the missionaries. Happiness and enthusiasm passed all bounds. Sunday, March 17, 1929 remains indelibly printed on the hearts of the two people who that day began a ministry which has now reached 20 years. The "*Call from Macedonia*" was being answered.

Prospecting for the establishment of a Mission Station has many facets. It is not a question of pitching one's tent and starting to preach! Kinkosi was the headquarters where supplies were

stored, and to which it was necessary to return every few days to bake bread (in a hole in the ground) and replenish the food box. Each day was filled with many miles of tramping through the tall elephant grass or deep forests. The search for a spring involved cutting paths through the jungle undergrowth with machettes.

There was no contact with the outside world except when the little river steamer brought mail once a month. There was no radio to tell what was going on " outside". There was no station to go back to for supplies or fellowship. But there was a station to go "forward" to, and getting there left little time or thought for what was going on elsewhere.

SEEKING A SITE

By the end of May seven possible sites for a Mission Station had been prospected. None of them contained all that was being sought. A good water supply was a primary consideration; a large plateau for buildings, sufficient garden land to feed students, workmen, and hospital patients, streams for bathing purposes, forests to supply lumber, rocks, clay for brick making, all had to be found, and found at a spot high enough to be above the habitat of the malaria-carrying mosquito and the Sleeping Sickness carrying tsetse fly. All of this had to be found in a spot that would be accessible to the people to be evangelized. None of the seven sites prospected contained all that was being sought. The water supply was the main difficulty.

The chiefs were called together and the problem placed before them. A heated discussion ensued during which all eyes were on Ngavuka, the chief of a small village on the north bank of the Yasa. The total male population consisted of the chief, his assistant, the State messenger, the foreman, and one citizen! It was clear that the group felt that the land adjoining Ngavuka's village would answer the need. It did! A spring from which 90 gallons of water bubbled forth each minute, was the first of seven springs to be found on the site. The hunt was ended. The work of clearing the land of thousands of scrub trees began. A Mission Station was born, at which all the many phases of missionary activity were to be carried on.

THE SICK HAVE BEEN CARED FOR

It was the custom, at the time our work opened, for the missionaries to take a box of medicines whenever they went on the trail. There was so much of sickness and suffering wherever one went. It was not surprising that wherever the tent was pitched during the months of prospecting immediately became a gathering place for the sick. The medical work was well started before the site for the new station had been chosen.

There were no rural dispensaries in the area at that time; the nearest Mission hospital was more than two hundred miles away (we are still that far from the Mission doctor). The government had just begun its spectacular fight against Sleeping Sickness, yaws, and other endemic diseases. The splendid government medical services of today were not very well developed. The ministry of healing was carried on largely by missionaries.

The first dispensary at Kikongo was housed in one corner of the thatch shed which also served as living quarters for the missionaries, store-room for all supplies and personal belongings, carpenter shop, food store for the students and workmen, school house, and church! Quite a shed. A long line of ambulatory patients stood before the dispensary window each day. There was no place for the bed-ridden except a cleared space under the trees at the edge of the forest. The first nine months brought 92 in-patients and 1253 out-patients. There was even an amputation, performed on the carpenter's bench.

From this simple beginning has grown a medical work that embraces all the principal branches of the healing art, including surgery, a maternity unit, and a leper camp. During the second year of our work, Dr. Francis Harper was stationed here, an independent British woman physician primarily interested in the study treatment of Sleeping Sickness. Except for that period, Kikongo has had no resident doctor. In the early years Mrs. Smith or Mrs. Armstrong cared for the sick. Since 1934 Agnes Anderson has directed the hospital which has developed in every branch. Dr. Dorothea Witt was the first of the Kwango Area doctors to come for surgical work. Her trip in 1935 was made by Kipoy, about two hundred miles up and down hill over native

trails, for the purpose of ushering young Robert Smith into the world. Dr. Freas, Dr. Osterholm, and Dr. Austin have added to the building up of our surgical department.

The opportunity presented by the medical work to chase out fear and superstition and to point to the Giver of Eternal Life, is immeasurable. Many have come to know the Great Physician through those who minister to their bodily ills in His Name.

Not only have the sick been cared for; orphans have found their only chance for life; widows have escaped persecution and death by coming here for refuge.

ORPHANS AND WITCHES

We could fill a book with stories about orphans and witches. By witches are meant older women who are no longer wanted by the clan, and are considered a curse to the village.

We were on our way to a rural baby clinic one day when we suddenly came upon the body of an old woman lying in the middle of the road. The grass was so high that we did not see her until we were almost on her. She had been dead for about two days. The tropical sun had beaten upon her and the rain had pelted her unresisting form. A thoughtful little beetle had carefully rolled one little ball of dirt after another until he had partially buried her face. No one else had cared. We could see the foot-prints of those who had come upon her in the road, and in their fright had rushed into the tall grass. We buried her by the side of the road, and set out to find her relatives.

We soon discovered that this woman was not childless. She was a widow, but she had two daughters and a son who could easily have cared for her. Calamity had befallen the village where she was living with one of her daughters, and the people had declared that she was a witch. They beat her and chased her from them. She sought refuge with her son, but soon was again beaten and chased away. She went to her other daughter. After only a short time of peace, she was again blamed for whatever trouble came to the village. In desperation she wandered around the country, and turned up one day in the village which had first started her on her wanderings. The people immediately fell upon her; the welts on the body which we found in the road bore elo-

quent testimony to the treatment she had been given.

A number of "witches" have found refuge at Kikongo. One day, when a new one came in, a medical worker looked up from the microscope where he had been working, and said: "The witches have a better time now that you missionaries are here. I remember how we treated my own grandmother. When grandfather died, they buried my grandmother with him, leaving only her head above ground. We all taunted her and persecuted her until she died. I didn't know then that it was microbes and not witches which caused sickness."

CLINICS

Medical work does not consist entirely of caring for the sick, however. Preventive medicine also has a place on our program. Pre-natal clinics, the obstetrical department, and well-baby clinics all help to keep down the number of sick. The baby clinics are the most satisfying work we do all week.

Starting with only one clinic of 133 babies in 1933, we have grown to seven clinics which cared for 1045 babies in 1948. The six rural clinics mean a drive of from 65 to 85 miles each week, in a section where the tall grass sometimes obscures the road and grass fires make the way dangerous. But the reduction in infant mortality makes it well worthwhile. At the beginning of our work in 1929, a local government agent told us that the infant mortality was 80%. The progressive depopulation of the area was due in large measure to hemp smoking and sleeping sickness. The story is quite different now. By checking with government figures, we know that practically every baby born within the area served by our clinics, is a member of one of them. The mortality figures have become lower each year until 1948 showed an infant mortality of 2.5% among the babies in our clinics. Our happiness would know no bounds at this splendid result, if it were not for the fact that we know that our present clinics reach less than 2% of the babies in our entire field.

GROPING MINDS HAVE BEEN BROUGHT INTO THE LIGHT

It must be difficult for Christians at home, who so naturally turn to the Bible for comfort, for inspiration, or for courage, to realize what it must be like to be illiterate. If it were not for Mission Schools, the Bible and all other books would have remained closed to the people of Congo. It has been government policy to leave all education in the hands of Christian Missions. In recent years the government has established a few schools of its own. It has always subsidized the work of the Roman Catholic mission. This year the government is taking a vital interest in the schools which have been established and maintained by Protestant Missions.

Kikongo established its work in a field where, prior to the work of Nzonzi, Ronda and Makengo, there were no schools. How then could we hope to establish a Christian church that would endure among a people whose minds were in darkness? From whence would come the leadership of the church? Who was there to guide the people out of the darkness of fear and superstition? How could their horizons be enlarged and help be made available to them from the fields of science, literature and religion? It was impossible as well as inadvisable for the missionaries to assume all the responsibility for leading these people out of darkness into light.

SCHOOLS BEGUN

So a school was started soon after our tent was pitched on the new site. The tent itself became one of the class-rooms as soon as the shed was built. The missionaries' wall-less sitting-room served as a second class-room. The first school had only 46 pupils who went to school part of each day and spent the rest of the day building temporary dormitories and making gardens. The boys slept in the forest, or in nearby villages until their dormitories were ready. There was such eagerness for learning that by the end of the first year there were 58 village teacher-evangelists who, in addition to conducting daily chapel services and instructing candidates for baptism, were attempting to teach the three R's to some 2761 children. These 58 teacher-evangelists

were scattered over a field nine days walk in length and five days walk in breadth. What a job it was to supervise those schools !

This was only a small part of the 15,000 sq. miles of territory which was considered the new Kikongo field, and in which there was no other Christian witness. There were no roads of any kind, just narrow foot-paths which led up and down hill, and over hot plains covered with sharp-elephant grass which scratched all exposed body surfaces. For 12 years the missionaries had no way of covering this great field except by these foot-paths.

And yet, in spite of insufficient supervision, and lack of funds and materials, the educational work has grown from the place where a missionary personally taught "b-a ba, m-a ma" to a group of aspiring young "teachers", to the place where the station school courses are taught by some of these same boys who have since graduated from the school for pastors and teachers at Kimpese. Since 1941 it has been possible to award diplomas for the completion of six years of grammar school work. Mrs. Armstrong, who took over the school in 1930, has been largely responsible for the progress made. Grace Cooper came in 1937 and has made her primary contribution in work among the women and girls. Gertrude Anderson, after 20 years of missionary service in Burma, took over the direction of the boys' school in 1946, when the Armstrongs were called to the Mission Secretaryship.

The station school draws its students from villages where the language spoken may be Kimbala, Kihungana, Kihumbu, Kiyansi, Kiyaka, Kifunuka, Kingongo, or allied dialects. Some of these languages are as closely related as the latin tongues of French, Spanish and Portuguese, or the various germanic-tongues. Others of them differ as greatly as the latin and germanic groups differ. Yet all of these students have done their Central School work in the Kikongo language and in French, which are foreign to all.

Do not confuse Kikongo, the name of the station, with Kikongo the name of the language spoken by the Bakongo people. The people of the region felt that the station should be named Kikongo because that was the name of the nearest village. The missionaries acquiesced because the name seemed prophetic of the language unification toward which we were working. The

Kikongo language is now used in the the preparation of literature for almost all of our ABFMS work.

Village schools take care of the first difficult year of introduction to the three R's and prepare students for entrance into the regional schools, of which there are thirteen. The village and regional schools are entirely supported by the local churches, and take the students through three years of grammar school work.

BUILDING OF CHARACTER

Educational work is concerned with far more than teaching how to read and write. We also try to teach how to live. Courses in Christian family life, child-care, nutrition, cooking, hygiene and better agriculture have all had a place on our educational program. A pastor who urges his people to give so that the church may be self-supporting, but has no interest in the living conditions of his flock, or the means by which they may attain self-support is only half a pastor. An impoverished people, lacking many of what are considered the necessities of life, and suffering from chronic inertia due in large part to preventable diseases and malnutrition, need to be taught the simple rules of hygiene, and the most effective means of making the land supply that which is needed for health and growth. It was partially in order to have sufficient land where we could give a larger place to the teaching of these subjects that Kikongo Station was founded.

Only the fringe of this work has been touched, but a beginning has been made and we shall continue until others come to build on the foundations already laid.

AGRICULTURAL WORK

Introducing the men to working in the gardens was not easy, because that is women's work. We still have obstacles to hurdle before the men will believe that they can take a larger share of the heavy tasks which this society allots to women. Sometimes we have to use drastic measures. Such was the case this past year when the school-boys all went on strike rather than dig manioc. They had been brought to the place where they would plant manioc, and even weed in the gardens. But they preferred to go

hungry rather than humiliate themslves to the point of doing more "Women's work". Since there was no other way to get the manioc harvested, the boys had to choose between school and digging manioc. After two months of no school, about two-thirds of them decided that school was more important than their pride. Especially when seventeen year old Wesley Brown and fourteen year old Bob Smith went to the fields and dug manioc with them.

Introducing new foods into the diet is anything but easy. There is marked protein deficiency in the daily diet of the region. We have tried to combat it by the introduction of vegetables and grains high in protein. It was a long battle before the protein rich sesame grain was accepted. Even after they had grown it in the school gardens, the boarding school pupils refused to taste it when it was prepared for them. Gradually a few began to eat it; the victory was won when some of them asked to have the portions of those who did not want it. An attempt to introduce ground nuts this year did not promise much success either, but a tasty way of preparing them was found and now you may have ground nuts any Wednesday that you want to eat with Kikongo's students.

WOMEN'S WORK

Kikongo's missionaries have felt very strongly that no people can rise above the standard set for its women. A school for girls was started by Mrs. Armstrong in the second year of our work. There have been years when the number of women and girls almost equalled that of men and boys in our station school. But ancient ways and the "bambuta" system, whereby the clan has almost complete control over a girl, have fought us every step of the way. We are still far from reaching our goal. In a society where a woman's role is that of bearing children, making gardens, and cooking, it is not easy to convince the people that the mothering of children has other phases than the physical one. They find it difficult to understand that every mother is a teacher whether she wishes to be or not, and that the country will go forward only as the mothers of men are equipped to properly teach their children and wisely contribute toward their physical, mental, social, and spiritual growth. There are only a few who are beginn-

ing to believe that a woman might be a person in her own right, capable and worthy of playing an important role in the destiny of her people.

NIENGA

Perhaps the story of Nienga will help in the understanding of the problem.

During the last couple of years, man-eating lions have been working havoc and spreading terror in our region. A few months ago, word came that Nienga had been eaten by a lion. The news was particularly upsetting to us because Nienga was one of many orphans who have been cared for at Kikongo.

A few days later word came that Nienga had not been eaten by a lion after all. She had run away from her husband and had started the lion story in order to frighten him. She was tired of his cruel beatings, and his more cruel taunts because she had not borne him a child. You will need to know more of her story in order to understand the situation. Here is the story.

When visiting the village of Kingulu-Nsai in 1936, Mrs. Armstrong came upon a child that looked to be about five years old. The emaciated body was feverish; the ribs were strikingly visible; the pale greyish-yellow skin, bereft of its usual dark pigment, spoke of anemia. The little girl was far gone with Sleeping Sickness. Efforts to find her parents revealed that she had none. She and her ten year old sister Nienga were being indifferently cared for by an aunt. This aunt was heartily glad to turn the children over to the missionary. The little girls had been sleeping in the tall grass at the edge of the village, and getting food as best they could.

Nienga's devotion to her little sister was beautiful to see during the three ensuing years when little Mulema continued her hopeless struggle for life. In all that time there had been no relative of any kind to visit the children at the Mission. Our hearts ached for Nienga when she threw herself on the dead body of her little sister and cried out: "What shall I do, what shall I do without you?"

Nienga found Christ during that period. There was no doubting that something very wonderful had happened to her.

She was radiant. Instead of giving herself up to heathen wailing and mourning, her sorrow spent itself in an unusually beautiful act of devotion, she responded to the needs of an orphan baby. She gave herself to that baby as wholeheartedly as she had given herself to her little sister. It was phenomenal, for we had not yet succeeded in persuading any woman to care for the baby of another, especially when it was in no way related to her.

Nienga grew into an attractive young woman who did not lack suitors from among our students. Then one day two men called upon us. They announced that they were Nienga's relatives, and said: "All these years we have yearned to see our child (they could so easily have done so by the simple expedient of walking a few hours to the station); why, oh why have you missionaries not sent her to us each vacation period?" And so on and on they went. When we asked why they had done nothing for their children during all those years, and why the little girls had been left to sleep out of doors while in the village, the older man replied: "Oh, they were nobody then!" And to our question, "Why have you come now?" he made a gesture which portrayed the curves of Nienga's budding young womanhood, and said: "She is ready to be married now; I have been offered bride-price money for her." We were furious, and helpless, for we had no legal claim to the girl.

Nienga was so happy to be able to go home to "folk" that she gleefully took part in the exodus from the Mission Station at the next school vacation.

She returned a few weeks later with legs and arms scarred from work with the fiber plant which she had been preparing for market for her uncle. She had a haunted look, and her eyes were evasive. It soon became known that her uncle had made arrangements for her to marry into a polygamous household, and had threatened to punish her if she told the missionaries. He threatened as only a heathen can threaten who believes in evil spirits and witchcraft.

The struggle between the village and the mission went on for some time. The mission succeeded in releasing Nienga from the polygamous entanglement, only to lose her later on to the pressure of custom. She finally succumbed to the opinion of her

people that her life was being unfruitful. She was old enough to bear a child and had not done so.

One day Nienga was brought to the hospital suffering from a venerial infection that was far advanced. It was too late to save her baby. After long treatment she was able to leave the hospital. But it was unlikely that she could look forward to a happy home with children of her own to care for.

She married after a while, but marriage in Congo is not considered valid unless there are children. Her husband was a Christian; he meant well, but the pressure of custom and public opinion were too great. He reproached her and beat her and finally, in desperation she ran away. He soon took another wife.

It is not easy to change custom. But little by little the "people that walk in darkness" will see a great light .... when they come to really know the Christ who said: "I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

As that light comes, customs change. A few women are beginning to know their own true value and are preparing to make a contribution to their own people that has not yet been possible.

The length of the road ahead was brought home to us just today. A new baby was brought to be registered at the baby clinic. Its mother was wearing a very pretty new cloth. Knowing the custom for a husband to show his approval of his wife by giving her a new cloth when she bears a child, we were enthusiastic in our admiration of the cloth. Immediately behind her came another woman wearing an almost identical piece of cloth. When we showed our interest in the coincidence, the two women burst into laughter, and quite pleased with themselves informed us: "Of course we have similar cloths, we both have the same husband !"

"FOR THE SON OF MAN IS COME TO SAVE THAT WHICH WAS LOST"

Christ healed the bodies of the people... and following in his steps we have medical work. He spent a great deal of his time teaching, more especially in the training of the group who were to carry his teachings to the uttermost parts of the world...and

so we must have educational work. But He gave his life, every minute, every hour, all of it, that we might have Eternal Life. That is the message which the ABFMS sent its missionaries to the Belgian Congo to make known. Kikongo had no other reason for coming into being.

The ABFMS Congo Mission is a FAITH mission. It need take second place to none in its record of ventures of faith. Nothing but faith in the living God could have carried the work forward in the face of what happened. The year 1929, which marked the founding of Kikongo station, also marked the stock crash which sent the economic world reeling, and which inaugurated a period of depression, and recession, quickly followed by a Second World War.

The work of building the new station had barely started when cries of retrenchment began. We dreaded the annual letters from New York which told us that it was necessary to make further cuts in appropriations. To that was added the heart-breaking news: "There is not enough money to pay the return passage of all the missionaries on furlough." Among others, the Armstrongs were kept home at a time when they were desperately needed at Kikongo.

In order to better visualize the situation, it might be well to know that during the years between 1929 and 1945, there were four periods during which either the Armstrongs or the Smiths were the only missionaries to care for all departments of the work. In addition to medical, educational, and evangelistic work, was the task of clearing the land of thousands of scrub trees, clearing the forest for plantation, grading the land for building sites, and providing buildings that would shelter all departments of work and the station family that grew to number more than 700 persons. It was a happy day when we could send the following report to the government concerning the 480 acres of land that had been accorded to Kikongo: "37 1/2 acres of forest protecting water sources; 82 1/2 acres of land cleared and graded for building sites; 360 acres of land in school gardens and in fallow.

During those seventeen years, the missionary staff (including wives) numbered two, three, four, five, and twice it reached the phenomenal size of six. There were many years when the station

was left for weeks, and even months without a missionary, or with Agnes Anderson alone, while the missionary couple itinerated in the villages.

It was ridiculous to think that such a slender staff of missionaries could hope to effectively evangelize a field 15,000 sq. miles in area. It was still too large a field after a thousand square miles of it were ceded to the Swedish Baptist Mission and another thousand square miles to the Moanza field. It wasn't until 1940 that it was possible to itinerate this field other than by foot paths.

Added to this was the fact that the work did not start in a normal manner, as when a missionary establishes a station, with the work growing gradually from that center. When Kikongo was established, there were already 636 baptised believers scattered all through the field mentioned in the chapter on educational work. 620 more were baptised during the first year, and the work spread like wild-fire over an even more extended area. Within five years 2321 had been baptised and 4603 were seeking baptism. People were pressing us on every hand for teacher-evangelists, which we were unable to train in sufficient numbers to meet the needs. Nor were we sufficiently staffed to adequately supervise those who were placed as teacher-evangelists in the villages.

Added to the fact that appeals were coming from all directions for the gospel, was the heart-sickening fact that much precious time had to be spent in carefully investigating, reporting to authorities, and following up cases of persecution that were worthy of the middle ages. When it was decided to establish Kikongo, there was no other Christian Mission station in the area. The Jesuits have since established five Mission Stations to work in this field. What a wonderful testimony to the presence of the Holy Spirit in the lives of these young Congo Christians, that so many of them remained firm in the face of severe trials. They knew in whom they believed.

One sometimes wonders which is the more heart-breaking task .... to work for years without any visible response, or to have too much response, with hundreds of open doors which one is unable to enter. Whatever the motives may have been, the doors were open to us on every hand. It was not possible to adequately prepare all those who sought baptism. Each itinerary

into the field brought delegations of folk who would follow after the caravan, or intercept it en route, asking for teachers. Or perhaps they asked only that the missionaries call at their village. Over and over again the answer had to be, "No, we'd like to, but it isn't possible just now." For at that time we were receiving annual letters from the Boards telling of further reductions in staff and in appropriations. Older missionaries were retiring from the field, or dying, and were not being replaced.

It would be naive to suppose that the people understood the hunger that was in their hearts. Many were like the Jews of Christ's time who hoped for a Messiah who would found a temporal Kingdom and bring material blessing to His people. Wherever the gospel is preached, material blessing follows in its train and it is not too surprising that so primitive a people should have confused the by-products of the gospel with the gospel itself.

THE WAR AND THE PROPHET MOVEMENT

Try to picture a group of about 120,000 people who are surely among the most primitive people in existence. Think of a few of them as having perceived, out of great darkness, tiny glimmers of light scattered here and there. Picture little men, carrying little matches, trying to keep those scattered glimmers of light glowing. Picture the pleading for more light .... which met with refusal. Picture the bewilderment and misunderstanding which followed the refusal. Picture the mixed motives for wanting the gospel.

If you have that picture well in mind you will have a basis for understanding what happened in 1940. These primitive people hadn't seen many white people; they thought of them as having special powers, as being somehow immune to the dangers which befall ordinary folk. It was incredible that these powerful creatures should not be master of their own destiny. The people couldn't believe that the Mission did not have the means to build a new station among the Bayaka. Some of the native churches from the older fields were ready to underwrite a native worker for a new station, but American Baptists were not ready to enter the wide-open door. The Bayaka continued to make the long trek to Kikongo, sometimes carrying their sick for ten days under

the blazing sun, to reach the hospital. They grew more and more weary as the years passed.

Their disillusionment with white people was intensified when Belgium fell into the hands of Germany, and Congo was mobilized to defend its liberty. It was incredible that the white rulers should have fallen into the hands of forces stronger than themselves. The fact that man-power was mobilized to the farthest corner of the colony, only added to the people 's dissatisfaction. Automobile roads were hurriedly built; white people penetrated everywhere in increasing numbers, requiring the people to produce materials needed for the war effort. The people didn't understand that they were being required to produce in order that their own land might remain free. They could see only that they were required to do work which was distasteful to them, and that some of their young men were being required to become soldiers and to take part in the slaughter of white men many thousands of miles from home. Their whole world was topsy-turvy.

KIALA

A wide-spread prophet movement offered a door of escape to their confused minds. The first prophets came from among the Bayaka people. Kiala, an ex-Christian who had returned to polygamy and fetishism, rallied the people of Bitadi. He declared that he had been called of God to lead his chosen ones to the promised land. He had received instructions direct from heaven telling him how to gather the chosen ones. They were to build a great ark which would reach to heaven. The people worked frantically day and night, felling giant trees which they hauled to the top of the hill on which Bitadi is built. They soon had a four-tiered ark built in the center of the village. The main floor was for all of the faithful; the next floor was for the prophet's retinue of physician, clerk, police and officers; the third floor was for his two wives; the prophet himself occupied the trapeze-like structure that topped the "ark". It was from this exalted position that he harangued the people; he instructed them to throw away their medical passports, their tax books, their gun permits. . . . all those papers which linked them to the white man. In addition, they were to destroy their flocks, herds, and gardens.

Frenzied followers of the prophet, eager to board the ark which was to take them directly to heaven, slaughtered their herds or drove them to the nearest stream to be drowned. Plantations were laid waste. After days of fasting, the people spent the entire night feasting, singing, and being baptised by the prophet. The baptism consisted of placing the left hand on the heart and the right hand in a pot of water while the prophet mumbled an incantation. Every once in a while he would single out someone whom he declared to be a witch, not worthy to enter the ark.

Kiala was the first of dozens of prophets who arose in quick succession. Each had his own brand of baptism and his own dire prophecies or rosy promises. In one case the people were told to reinforce their houses as there was to be a deluge of blood. Everywhere the people abandonned their work and, moving mostly under the cover of darkness, rallied to the centers where the prophets held forth. The whole country-side seemed to be going mad. It was necessary for the government to step in and by military occupation prevent destruction that must eventually result in famine. The "major" prophets were sent into exile and the "minor" prophets put to work.

It was an extremely difficult task for the government to apprehend the guilty ones. Almost all of the subversive activities had been carried on in the dead of night. The only visible signs were the carefully cleaned graves (in preparation for the resurrection of the dead), and the absence of fetishes in the huts of the people. One of the major prophets had declared that the people were to destroy all of their fetishes. The government decided to consider as suspect any who did not have fetishes.

This created a definite problem for those who had remained faithful in spite of the mass madness that was going on all about them. As Christians they had long since given up their fetishes. But even some of them became panicky, and rather than be suspected of having had a part in the movement, they hurried to the fetish-doctor. It was hey-day for the fetishers and witch-doctors whose power had been on the wane in those sections where the people were turning to Christ. It was heart-breaking for the missionary who hurried from one bewildered group to the other, trying to encourage the faithful who had not fallen victim to the

general hysteria, and trying to reach the hearts of those whom the catastrophe had left secretive and suspicious. The section of the field, nearer to the Mission Station, was not outwardly affected to so large a degree. But even there a change had come over the people.

The war years ground on; the people wearied of supplying crude rubber, palm oil, and fiber for the machines of destruction. Young men returned to their villages from far-distant places, knowing a great deal about the power of machine guns and other weapons which destroy, and very little about the Spirit of God which sent the Prince of Peace to bring brotherhood among men. The tales which they told did not seem to waken any desire for the riches of the spirit in the hearts of the people back home. Rather, there was a new zest for the white man's material benefits, and for the secular knowledge which would help them to obtain what they desired.

Doors to the hearts of the people have nearly closed in many places. There is still indifference where once there was eagerness. There is questioning in the minds of bewildered people whose lives have been overturned and who are not quite sure that the Christian Message, in which they once had such high hopes, is able to meet their need.

It was to this field, long understaffed and paying the natural consequences of that understaffing, that reinforcements began to come. Gertrude Anderson arrived just before Christmas in 1945, to join the Armstrongs who had been working entirely alone after the Smiths, Agnes Anderson and Grace Cooper went to America for overdue furloughs. Two months after Miss Anderson's arrival the Smiths returned; the Armstrongs left shortly afterward. In November 1946, Mr. and Mrs. Atkins came; the long-awaited builder was on the field and we could look forward to permanent buildings and an end to the endless succession of mud and thatch structures which were constantly needing replacement as termites, borers and rot destroyed them.

The year 1947 was a wonderful year; it saw the mission embarked on the Bayaka station project, which had been included in the World Mission Crusade program. The Robbins were sent to Kikongo to supervise the out-post work in the whole field until

such time as the State should grant occupation rights to the site which had been selected. Agnes Anderson and Grace Cooper both returned from furlough. Never in all of its history had Kikongo had such a staff of missionaries.

PROBLEMS AND BLESSINGS

1948 brought blessing and problems. It brought the falling away of several leaders whose hearts were set on temporal rather than spiritual blessings; the places which they left remain vacant. It brought a tide of unrest and non-cooperation among students and faculty which were grievous to bear. But it also brought great blessing. Constant, unremitting prayer began to break down some of the barriers which the people had erected between us. Of the large group of non-Christian students which entered Central School in the Fall of 1948, all but a few very young boys have accepted Christ as their Saviour. There is concrete evidence from several quarters of a new search after things of the spirit, and a definite deepening of the spiritual lives of some of those who are teachers and leaders of youth. For the first time in several years, a number of students signified their desire to give their lives to full-time Christian service and offered to go to the training school for pastors and teachers at Kimpese. Among the blessings which 1948 brought, was the arrival in November of Lewis and Susie Brown, whose coming brings promise that the Kwango Area Bible School may soon be established under their direction.

THE FUTURE

Twenty years ago American Baptists pledged themselves to evangelize this field. Time has proved that it cannot be done from one center. Government authorisation for the opening of the new station at Boko, has been received in time to fill our hearts with thanksgiving on this anniversary. During the years, 5336 have confessed their Lord in baptism. There could have been many more if only it had been possible to adequately prepare all those who sought for it.

This year Bill and Helen Robbins will move to the new station at Boko. They need co-workers to help establish the various

departments of work, and to help in the physical building of the new station. They need co-workers to help them win the hearts of that great throng of people, many of whom secretly cling to their faith in the false prophets who were sent into exile. The station is being built at a spot which is between two sections of the field which have been partially reached, and on the edge of a field which has never been touched by us. Surely the need of those thousands of Bayaka people who have never heard the story of the Christ, who are still groping in darkness greater than we can understand, will meet with a responsive chord in the hearts of consecrated young people in America.

Kikongo will continue to serve the polyglot group of people to be found in the northern section of the field in an area of about 7500 sq.mi. The work to date has been confined largely to the Bambala, Bangongo, and Bahungana groups who make up less than one half of the field and only a part of whom have been reached with the gospel. The entire Bahumbu, Bayansi and Bafunuka group has barely been touched at all. The Lord is opening the door for us among this group, through the ministry of our baby clinics. Because the Bambala people were the ones to seek the establishment of a Mission Station, the Bahumbu have long considered that we had come to preach the gospel to the Bambala people. For more than a year, however, they have been saying: "These babies that you have been caring for are your babies; we want you to teach them, for we have seen the results of your teaching." Please God that we may enter this door while the hearts are warm with welcome.

There are about three hundred villages in the area for which Kikongo will remain responsible. There is no other evangelical witness in all that area. At present only seventy of those villages have teacher-evangelists. We are eagerly and prayerfully looking forward to the establishment of the Bible School under Lewis Brown's dynamic, spiritual leadership, in faith that the school will pour forth a stream of spirit-filled workers for all the Kwango area, who will "count all things loss but for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus", and who will not rest until they have spent their lives in bringing their people to the Lord.

We have faith to believe that in His own time, the Lord will

bring these things to pass, if we are faithful. Our faith was quickened this week when Samuel Ngumbu started out on his ministry to the Mokolonzadi church field. His path led in the direction which we expected to follow the next day, so we offered to take him part of the way in the truck if he would wait over a day. A broad grin spread over his face as he chose several hours walking in preference to a ride. This was his reply: "But I can't wait until tomorrow. The days are passing and time is short. I had planned to bring a message to the village of Kindongo tonight, and I do not want to pass them by."

The twenty years which have elapsed since the founding of Kikongo station have brought rich blessing to thousands of people. It is futile to mourn lost opportunities. It is equally futile to become discouraged at the present seeming hardness of heart and lack of enthusiastic response. Let us rather take unto ourselves the words which the Lord said unto Moses:

"Wherefore criest thou unto me? Speak unto the children of Israel that they go FORWARD."

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